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## GAO chief says intelligence czar must have authority

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congress' chief investigative watchdog said Tuesday that a new national intelligence director must have power over both agency purse strings and decisionmaking to be effective.

Comptroller General David Walker's recommendation contradicted President Bush's call a day earlier for an intelligence director who would oversee counterterrorism, but with limited authority.

Walker, who heads the Government Accountability Office, and members of the 9/11 Commission also told the House Government Reform Committee that Congress needs to revamp the way it carries out its "essential" role of watching over the intelligence community.

On Monday, Bush advocated creating the position of intelligence director outside the presidential cabinet for "oversight" of intelligence agencies, but with no authority to shift money or personnel between agencies or to alter decisions.

"Someone has to be in charge of all key planning, budgeting and operational activities ... in order for the entire intelligence community to be effective," Walker said.

Commission members Bob Kerrey and John Lehman said "it would be better to do nothing" than create an intelligence director without authority.

Walker and the 9/11 commissioners also said Congress needs to streamline committees, insist on greater intelligence access and create a National Counterterrorism Center to coordinate readiness across the country.

"It's time for an entirely new system," said Lehman, a Republican commissioner and former Navy secretary.

The hearing is the latest in a flurry of activity after the release of the 9/11 Commission's report two weeks ago. Although Congress is officially in recess until September, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee held its second hearing on the report Tuesday, and more hearings are scheduled.

With little over a month left in the 104th Congress, the main question is when Congress will introduce and act on legislation on the commission's more than 40 key recommendations.

Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn., who sits on the House Government Reform Committee, called on House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., to immediately summon members to Washington to address the report. Sens. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., and Mark Dayton, D-Minn., returned to Washington Tuesday for hearings. Rep. John Kline, R-Minn., has said he plans to return to Washington during the recess to draft legislation based on the report.

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